

PRIME MINISTER

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25

ARMS CONTROL AND THE US/SOVIET SUMMIT

You said before Christmas that you would like to discuss with some outside experts ideas which we might put to the Americans for handling arms control - particularly nuclear arms control - issues in the run up to the next US/Soviet Summit. This would cover SDI, START, INF, Third Country Forces and CTB.

Percy and I have been giving some thought to the best format for this. The sort of foreign policy/defence seminars which we have had recently have included typically 20 participants, but have shown themselves too unwieldy for policy purposes. We think that for this particular purpose you should opt for a very much smaller meeting - a maximum of 6-8 people.

Going on from there, you have to decide whether to make it a No.10 event or widen it to include the MOD and FCO. The problems with the latter are first that it inevitably increases the numbers (each Minister wants to bring at least one official, the Chiefs of Staff want to be represented); and the arguments favoured by each institution tend to get paraded and dominate the debate. We think therefore that you should make this a personal teach-in and not invite other Ministers or officials.

Finally we think that the three best outside thinkers on arms control issues - in the sense of the most articulate and with the broadest vision are Michael Howard, Professor Laurence Martin and Professor Lawrence Freedman. Although there would be a strong case for inviting Michael Quinlan, the fact is that he is a bit out of touch on the issues; and his participation would cause offence to Clive and others in MOD.

Agree to set up small meeting, perhaps over a meal, involving the three outside experts named?

CDP

7 January, 1986.

JD3AHG